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Voice of U.S. Policy

Walt Whitman Rostow

Special to The New York Times

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay, April 12—When President Johnson's twin-rotor helicopter landed on the sunny lawn of his villa here, one of the first men out was Walt Whitman Rostow.

When Mr. Johnson held his conversations with the other Presidents of the hemisphere,

Mr. Rostow was present even at the informal lawn and garden sessions, and when it came time to brief the press

at the Edificio Peninsular, it was Mr. Rostow who presided.

Since McGeorge Bundy and Bill D. Moyers left the White House, Mr. Rostow, a former professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has been emerging as the White House spokesman on foreign affairs.

This is widely regarded as an appropriate role, for Mr. Rostow is probably the most loquacious American official since Walt Whitman himself worked at the Interior Department more than 100 years ago.

Inside the White House, Mr. Rostow can be terse, detached and objective. Outside, he ranges through Washington talking endlessly and optimistically on the theme that things are going very well or soon will be.

Mr. Rostow is an architect of the United States policy in Vietnam, and proud of it. He now organizes and attends the President's Tuesday luncheon conferences, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and the White House Press Secretary, George Christian, are usually the only other guests.

He Plays Down His Role

Mr. Rostow confers in advance with the President and the Cabinet Secretaries on main points for discussion, prepares a formal agenda and follows through on the decisions.

In Washington and even in Punta del Este, officials are circulating an imaginary account that sounds as if it might have been written by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.: Mr. Rostow is explaining to his staff in the basement of the White House that Saigon has just fallen to the Vietcong, but he is insisting that this is no cause for alarm because it will cause the Vietcong endless new problems.



The New York Times
As loquacious as his namesake

The real-life Walt Rostow, like his predecessor Mr. Bundy, is careful to be deferential in talking about Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and he rejects all suggestions that he does anything except coordinate the flood of reports to the President. But he is in on the speech writing for the President, and he often winnows and summarizes the issues for decision.

Walt Whitman Rostow was born in New York on Oct. 7, 1916, a son of Victor Aaron Rostow and the younger brother of Eugene Victor Rostow, now Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

The family lived in Irvington, N.J., until Walt was 10 years old, then moved to New Haven. It was there that he went to high school and studied at Yale. He was graduated in 1936.

Mr. Rostow was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University's Balliol College before returning to Yale for his Ph.D. He began his teaching career as an economics instructor at Columbia.

\$585.50 for Luggage

He spent nearly three years abroad during the war, ending as a major in the Office of Strategic Services. As an O.S.S. agent he was aboard a British tanker sunk by a Ger-

He lost his luggage but saved his life.

Five years later Representative Ellsworth B. Foote of Connecticut introduced a bill to reimburse Mr. Rostow. It was adopted on May 19, 1947, and he received \$585.50 for his torpedoed belongings.

Mr. Rostow married Miss Elspeth Vaughan Davies in 1947. They have two children—Peter, 14, and Ann, 11. The White House assistant keeps fit by playing tennis and touch football.

Before returning to the United States, Mr. Rostow was Harnsworth Professor of American History at Oxford. He also taught at Cambridge before joining M.I.T. as a professor of economic history in 1950.

As an economic historian, he is adept at finding historical parallels and concepts to explain what Mr. Johnson is doing.

Thus the stages of Mr. Rostow's growth, politically if not economically, are advancing. He sees the President at Punta del Este carrying on the work of Simón Bolívar; he depicts him as the "Churchill of the Pacific" building barriers to aggression as Winston Churchill did in Europe; he sees the Great Society and the drive against poverty at home as historic extensions of Theodore Roosevelt's Square Deal, Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and John F. Kennedy's New Frontier.

None of this displeases the President. It does, however, displease Mr. Rostow's former university colleagues on the old Kennedy White House staff. They are savagely critical of his increasing influence, and they condemn his aggressive intellectualism as self-serving opportunism that consoles the President but tends to mislead him, particularly on Vietnam.

Still, Mr. Rostow's capacity for clear writing, for hard work and for personal survival are formidable. He has a charming smile, an equable temper and unusual talents for coordinating and inspiring his staff.

When President Kennedy transferred him from the White House to the State Department's policy-planning staff, he went without a murmur. Secretary Rusk did not bring him into the seventh-floor "inner circle" at the State Department, but he stayed on and finally returned to the White House after Mr. Bundy's departure for the Ford Foundation.

It was said that Mr. Rostow was not "replacing" Mr. Bundy and was not "replacing" Mr. Moyers, but gradually he seems to be taking on some of the most important assignments of both.

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